

CHESTER DELAWARE COUNTY TIMES (PA)
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Germ warfare?

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Speculation that Chester may have been chosen by the Central Intelligence Agency as a site for germ warfare experiments in the late 1950s has understandably concerned and angered residents.

The most infuriating aspect of the whole episode is that we probably will never know the truth. The CIA routinely refuses to comment on such reports, and even if it did, a goodly number of people would refuse to believe the denials.

It is extremely doubtful that the CIA actually conducted germ warfare experiments in Chester. Back in 1957, in the middle of the Cold War, all sorts of crazy plans were being hatched by our spies to keep us one step ahead of the Russians. It is entirely possible that some bozo on the CIA payroll came up with a wild-eyed scheme to test germ warfare in an American city and went so far as to spend 40 cents on weather data sheets for Chester. There is no evidence it went further than that.

Of course, we know that the government did engage in biological and chemical tests in isolated parts of the West, so that the report, issued by the Church of Scientology, can't simply be dismissed as pure hogwash.

We would be more comfortable if a group other than one backed by the Church of Scientology produced the analysis of CIA data. Although the group used the federal Freedom of Information Act to legally obtain the data, members of the church in the past have been known to commit burglaries and other illegal acts to obtain information against their enemies, including the federal government.

As some residents pointed out, Chester has enough to keep it busy without worrying about possible germ warfare some 23 years ago. However, the issue has been raised, and the people of Chester deserve whatever answers are available.

Surely, Congress has the power to investigate these charges and report to the people. Charges have been made in the past that the CIA and other agencies planned other bizarre experiments such as germ warfare tests in New York subways. It would help to clear the air if a definitive report is made about what the CIA did and didn't do on United States soil to unsuspecting citizens. We urge Rep. Robert Edgar (D-5th District) to push for such a report.

In the meantime, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we think it is safe to assume that no germ warfare tests occurred in Chester. Residents of that city have far more to fear from such real and present environmental dangers as the contaminated Wade Dump.